

Amendments to the Claims:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

1. (Currently Amended) A computer implemented method of extending promotional discounts on items for sale to consumers, comprising:
 - identifying a consumer by a unique identifier;
 - promoting a first selected item with a discount or special price to said identified consumer; wherein the discount or special price is granted upon purchase of said first selected item by said identified consumer within a predetermined time period;
 - determining if said identified consumer has acknowledged said promoting within the predetermined time period; and
 - prolonging the promoting beyond the predetermined time period upon determining that said consumer has acknowledged said promoting within the predetermined time period,

wherein the prolonging is independent of availability of the first selected item during the predetermined period.
2. (Original) The method of claim 1 wherein said discount or special price comprises a free sample.
3. (Original) The method of claim 1 wherein said discount or special price comprises a reduction in price for a plurality of items.
4. (Original) The method of claim 1 wherein said discount or special prices comprises points that can be accumulated and redeemed for related or unrelated items or cash in the future.

5. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 1 wherein said promoting comprises sending mail to said identified consumer and wherein said predetermined time period commences when said direct mail is to reach said identified consumer.

6. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 1 wherein said promoting comprises posting a notice of said discount or special price for said first selected item on a ~~network-accessible from a kiosk~~ at a location selling said item; and said acknowledgment of said promoting comprises recording a visit to said kiosk by said identified consumer.

7. (Currently Amended) The method of claim ~~[[5]]~~6 wherein said acknowledgment of said promoting comprises passing a store loyalty card through a reader at said kiosk.

8. (Currently Amended) The method of claim ~~[[6]]~~7 wherein in response to passing said card loyalty card through said reader, said kiosk generates a printed list of discounts or special prices to said identified consumer.

9. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 1 wherein said promoting comprises posting a notice of said discount or special price for said first selected item via a computer network ~~on a network-accessible~~ at a location selling said first selected item; and said acknowledgment of said promoting comprises scanning said first selected item at said location by a scanning device, wherein said scanning device displays said discount or special price of said first selected item.

10. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 1 wherein said promoting comprises posting a notice of said discount or special price for said first selected item via a computer network ~~on a network-accessible~~ at a location selling said first selected item; and said acknowledgment of said promoting comprises walking past an audio device at said location with a store loyalty card, wherein said audio device voices said discount or special price of said first selected item.

11. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 1 wherein said identifying comprises identifying said consumer with a limited direct identification.

12. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 11 wherein said identifying comprises identifying said consumer with a store loyalty card.

13. (Original) The method of claim 11 wherein said discount or special price comprises a free sample.

14. (Original) The method of claim 11 wherein said discount or special price comprises a reduction in price for a plurality of items.

15. (Original) The method of claim 11 wherein said discount or special prices comprises points that can be accumulated and redeemed for related or unrelated items or cash in the future.

16. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 11 wherein said promoting comprises sending mail to said identified consumer and wherein said predetermined time period commences when said direct mail is to reach said identified consumer.

17. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 11 wherein said promoting comprises posting a notice of said discount for said first selected item on a ~~network-accessible~~ ~~from a kiosk~~ at a location selling said first selected item; and said acknowledgment of said promoting comprises recording a visit to said kiosk by said identified consumer.

18. (Canceled)

19. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 11 wherein said promoting comprises posting a notice of said discount or special price for said first selected item via a computer network ~~on a network-accessible~~ at a location selling said first selected item; and said acknowledgment of said promoting comprises scanning said first selected item at said location

by a scanning device, wherein said scanning device displays said discount or special price of said first selected item.

20. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 11 wherein said promoting comprises posting a notice of said discount or special price for said first selected item via a computer network ~~on a network~~ accessible at a location selling said first selected item; and said acknowledgment of said promoting comprises walking past an audio device at said location with a store loyalty card, wherein said audio device voices said discount or special price of said first selected item.

21. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 1 further comprising promoting a second selected item with a discount or special price to said identified consumer, wherein the discount or special price for the second selected item is granted upon purchase of said second selected item by said identified consumer.

22. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 21 wherein said promoting of said second selected item is performed upon said acknowledgment of said promoting of said first selected item by said identified consumer.

23. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 21 wherein said identifying comprises identifying said consumer with a limited direct identification and wherein the discount or special price of said second selected item is granted upon purchase of said second selected item by said consumer using full direct identification of said consumer.

24. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 21 wherein said identifying comprises identifying said consumer with a limited direct identification and wherein the discount or special price of said second selected item is granted upon purchase of said second selected item by said consumer using only limited direct identification of said consumer.

25. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 21 wherein said identifying comprises identifying said consumer with a full direct identification and wherein the discount or

special price of said second selected item is granted upon purchase of said second selected item by said consumer using full direct identification of said consumer.

26. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 21 wherein said identifying comprises identifying said consumer with a full direct identification and wherein the discount or special price of said second selected item is granted upon purchase of said second selected item by said consumer using only limited direct identification of said consumer.

27. (Original) The method of claim 11 wherein purchase of said first selected item by said identified consumer is by credit or debit card.

28-35. (Canceled)

36. (Currently Amended) A method of extending promotional discounts on items for sale to consumers, comprising:

identifying using a computer network system a consumer by a unique identifier;
promoting using said computer network system a first selected item with a discount or special price to said identified consumer;

withdrawing using said computer network system said discount or special price to said identified consumer;

granting using said computer network system said discount upon purchase of said first selected item by said identified consumer prior to said withdrawing; ~~and~~

holding using said computer network system said withdrawing in abeyance upon an acknowledgment of said promoting by said identified consumer; and

detecting using said computer network system that said granting could not be performed by said computer network system,

~~wherein said identifying, promoting, withdrawing, granting and holding are performed by a computer network system, and wherein responsive to said detecting said identified consumer is unable to obtain said discount or special price upon said first selected item~~

~~prior to said withholding due to a malfunction of said computer network system~~, said method further comprising:

recording a price paid for said first selected item by said consumer at a location;

and

granting a rebate of the difference between said recorded price and said discount or special price at the next purchase of said first selected item by said consumer at said location.

37. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 1 wherein said first selected item is associated with a plurality of discounts or special prices including said discount or special price that is granted upon purchase of said first selected item by said identified consumer.

38. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 37 wherein said plurality of said discounts or special prices is used to ensure said identified consumer does not receive a discount or special price that said identified consumer is not entitled to receive.

39. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 37 wherein said plurality of discounts or special prices is used to facilitate customer service by issuing the best possible promotion given to any customer on a specific item when [[the]]a system implementing claim 1 is not functioning.

40. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 1 further comprising organizing said promoting according to a logical layout pattern.

41. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 1 further comprising withholding said promoting from consumers who have not received or acted upon notifications of past promotions.

42. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 1 further comprising promoting said first selected item with said discount or special price to a plurality of consumers.

43. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 42 further comprising promoting said first selected item with said discount or special price to said plurality of consumers based on limited direct identification.

44. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 1 whereby said promoting further comprises accompanying said discount or special price with additional factual information other than discounts or prices.

45. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 1 whereby said promoting is accomplished by selecting one or more notification mechanisms based on the cost of said notification mechanisms and the customer's history of interacting with different notification mechanisms.

46. (New) A method of extending promotional discounts on items for sale to consumers, comprising:

identifying a consumer by a unique identifier;

promoting a first selected item with a discount or special price to said identified consumer; wherein the discount or special price is granted upon purchase of said first selected item by said identified consumer within a predetermined time period;

determining if said identified consumer has acknowledged said promoting within the predetermined time period; and

prolonging the promoting beyond the predetermined time period upon determining that said consumer has acknowledged said promoting within the predetermined time period; and

wherein said identifying, promoting, withdrawing, determining and prolonging are performed by a computer network system.

47. (New) The method of claim 46 wherein said promoting comprises posting a notice of said discount or special price for said first selected item on a webpage.